



BRITISH INLAND AIRMAIL 1933-1934

Presentation to the Philatelic Society of Lancaster County (PA)

October 11th 2023

By Michael A. Bach



CREDITS

- **A. J. Phillips, Newport Wales:. Pioneer and Specialist in both British and World Aerophilately in the 1930's.**
Various publications
- **British Air Mail Society (B.A.M.S):**
"British Internal Airmails of the 1930's"
<https://www.gbintairmail.com/index.htm>
- **All covers are from my own collection**



The Railway Boom of the mid-19th Century created as many as 240 companies in the British Isles. Merges abounded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries however by 1920 there were still 120 companies. The Railway Act of 1921 grouped these into the “Big Four”, Serving the West (GWR), The North East, (LNER) The North West (LMS) and the South (SR). The government allowed these companies to charge for the delivery of letters and packets by rail. Examples of the GWR are above

1933: MAIL BY RAIL

In 1933 Imperial Airways carried 330.000 pounds of mail around the world covering over 3.5 million miles.

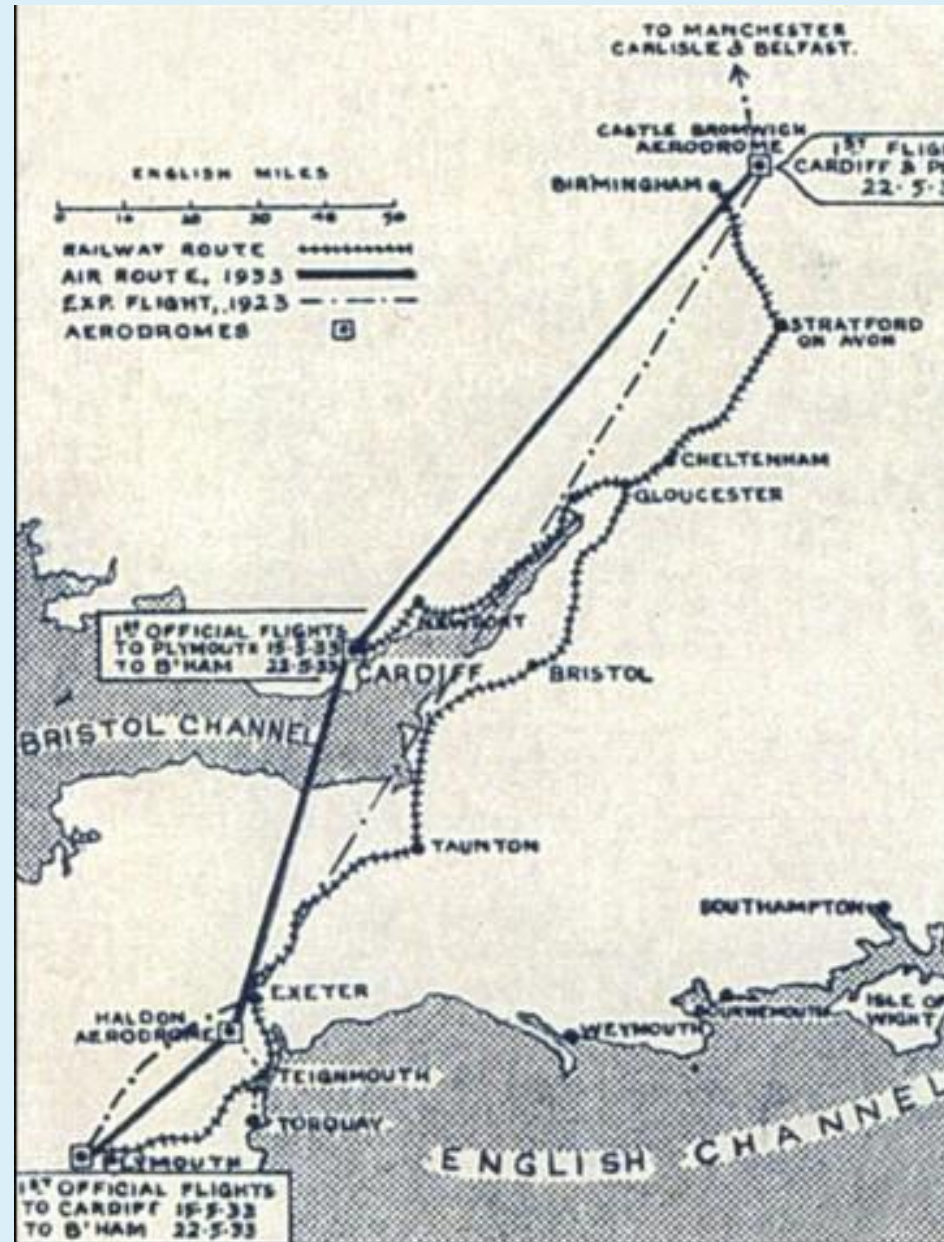
**However there was no Inland Mail.
No Aerophilately.**

The Railways ruled Inland Mail.

APRIL 12TH 1933: THE DAWN OF THE INLAND AIRMAIL

GWR AIR SERVICES

The service started on April 12th The first flight from Cardiff (South Wales To Plymouth Devon) took 80 minutes compared to nearly 5 hours by rail. It was now possible to send a letter between these two cities and receive a reply the same day !



Great Western Railway had been granted the powers to run Airways in 1929 promoted the first Commercial Airway to deliver mail from South Wales to Devon in the West of England

APRIL 12TH 1933: THE DAWN OF THE INLAND AIRMAIL

GWR AIR SERVICES



The Westland Wessex from Imperial Airways was used by Great Western Railway Air Services and was integral to its Air Label

APRIL 12TH 1933: THE DAWN OF THE INLAND AIRMAIL

GWR AIR SERVICES

The first Aerophilatelic Cover
for the British Isles



The Great West Railroad was allowed to use their Three Pence Railway Stamp for the first flights. This cover is one of only 20 carried to from Plymouth to Cardiff . A total of 200 covers were carried by planes that day.



The Great West Railroad first flight with special Airstamp. These were printed on sheets of 20 so this cover with # 48 comes from the third sheet was flown on the first flight from Cardiff to Teignmouth. .

MAY 15TH 1933

GWR AIR SERVICES

**The first Aerophilatelic Cover
with philatelic stamp
sanctioned by H.M.
Postmaster General for the
British Isles**



**SEPTEMBER 30TH
1933**

GWR AIR SERVICES

**GWR tried to promote this
service, however despite their
efforts it did not prove
financially viable**



The Great West Railroad last flight from Plymouth to Birmingham delayed one day due to fog, However special circular GWR Birmingham cancel is still dated September 30th.

Only 15 covers were on this flight

**SEPTEMBER 30TH
1933**

GWR AIR SERVICES

**This day marked the last flight
by GWR Commercial Airways
and the end of the first
attempt to deliver mail by air
in Great Britain**



Above is a block of 4 of the rather crude air label of this short lived service

AUGUST 25-26TH 1933

**INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES
WESTERN AIR EXPRESS**

**This was the second attempt to
provide an inland airmail service.**



This cover was on the first flight scheduled from London (Croydon) to Portsmouth. Inclement weather prevented the flight from landing in Portsmouth and so the plane was diverted to Southampton. Hence the Southampton cancel for mailing back to Newport.

**AUGUST 25-26TH
1933**

**INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES
WESTERN AIR EXPRESS**

**The plan was to have 3 flights
a day from London (Croydon)
to Portsmouth, Southampton
and Plymouth.**



Of the 180 covers carried on the first flight, 42 did not have any GB postage but were signed by the pilot S.W. A. Scott and canceled First Flight on August 26th. They are a unique collector's item..

AUGUST 25-26TH 1933

**INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES
WESTERN AIR EXPRESS**

As soon as H.M. Postmaster General was informed about this operation they were required to shut down for infringing the Royal Mail monopoly.



**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

PROVINCIAL AIRLINES - WESTCOUNTRY AIR SERVICE

**This was the third Inland Airmail
Service again using the same routes as
Western Air Express and a three pence
air label. Being an unofficial operation
it was forced to abandon airmail service
after the first week, and had to
apologize to the Post Office for
infringing their mail-carrying
monopoly.** 13

**The air labels were printed in blocks of 4 (Right),,. Color
Proofs (left) . There were four printings**



**This picture is of The Prince of Wales inspecting the DH83
Fox Moth in December 1932**

**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES -
WESTCOUNTRY AIR SERVICE**

**Provincial Airlines used the
DH 83 Fox Moth for its mail
deliveries**



**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES -
WESTCOUNTRY AIR SERVICE**

**London (Croydon) to
Plymouth and then by regular
rail to Liverpool**

714 covers sent on this flight



257 covers sent on this flight

**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES -
WESTCOUNTRY AIR SERVICE**

**Southampton to London and
then by regular rail to
Newport Wales**



**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES -
WEST COUNTRY AIR EXPRESS**

**Plymouth to Southampton
and then by regular rail back
to Portsmouth**

553 covers sent on this flight



714 covers sent on this flight

**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES –
WESTCOUNTRY AIR EXPRESS**

**London (Croydon) to Plymouth and
then by regular rail back to London
with no stamp delivered to
Edgware Middlesex with 3d
Postage Due and Edgware cancel**



Maybe less than 10 were return flight covers

**NOVEMBER 25-30TH
1933**

**PROVINCIAL AIRLINES -
WESTCOUNTRY AIR EXPRESS**

VERY RARE

**London to Plymouth on
November 25th and then return
to London with cancel on
November 26th.**



**These labels were sold
in booklets of five
blocks of four.
Each label cost 3d.
Note that the 3d is
missing from the label.**

**Label features
Portsmouth Guild Hall**

**Labels to the right are
for Island Air Express
intended to be used for
mail going to London
(Sepia) and Ryde (Blue)**



**FEBRUARY 3RD TO
MAY 17TH 1934**

**PORTSMOUTH, SOUTHSEA
AND ISLE OF WIGHT
AVIATION Ltd**

**This airline was expecting to
get a contract from HM post
Office however they did not.
There were only five flights
that carried "mail". Most of
the labels were used on
private souvenir letters.**



**FEBRUARY 19TH AND
20TH 1934**

MIDLAND AND SCOTTISH AIR FERRIES

The airline operated mail for two days from Birmingham to London and Birmingham to Liverpool to support the British Industrial Fair

The airline charged 3d but there was no label merely airline cancels. This was not sanctioned in advance by HM Postmaster General and was shut down after 2 days.

There were only 4 flights over the two days.

The airline itself closed in June
1934



What was RAS?

It was a consortium of the 4
main railways:

Great Western Railways (GWR)
London Midland Scottish (LMS)
Southern Railways (SR)
London, North Eastern Railway
(LNER) and
Imperial Airlines

Each airline was assigned flying
routes with LNER opting not to
have flights.

RAS was an oversight body that
passed proceeds to the railways
but as each chose to do other
activities or subcontract routes
it prove unmanageable.



**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

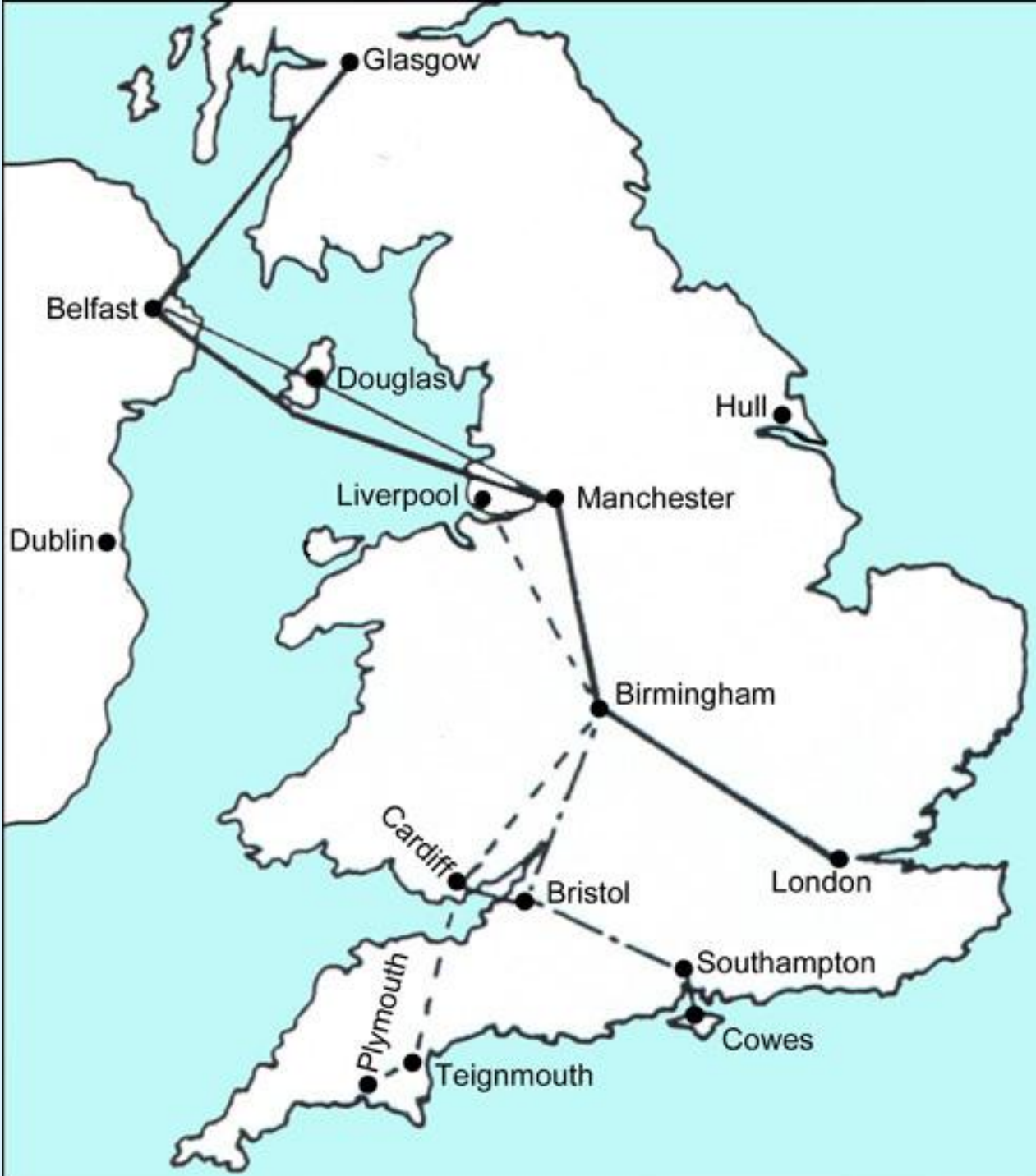
**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

Obtained a contract from
The British Government and
had an ambitious goal of
introducing 116 inland airmail
routes but was doomed to failure.

**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

THE ROUTES



**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

TO	L O N D O N	B E L F A S T	B I R M I N G H A M	B R I S T O L	C A R D I F F	C O W E S I O W	G L A S G O W	L I V E R P O O L	M A N C H E S T E R	P L Y M O U T H	S O U T H A M P T O N	T E I G N M O U T H	D O U G L A S I O M
FROM													
LONDON			LF						3				
BELFAST													
BIRMINGHAM								2					
BRISTOL													
CARDIFF								LF					
COWES (IOW)			2										
GLASGOW													
LIVERPOOL													
MANCHESTER													
PLYMOUTH								2					
SOUTHAMPTON													
TEIGNMOUTH													
DOUGLAS (IOM)													

THE COVERS

113 possible covers

Yellow: 40 owned

Blue: Not flown

LF: Last Flight



This cover has a Liverpool, Lime Street Cancel (it's origin) the RAS cancel and then the stamp is canceled in Glasgow and rerouted back to Liverpool, presumably by rail.

**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

**First Flight Cover without
cachet but with an RAS
Cancel**

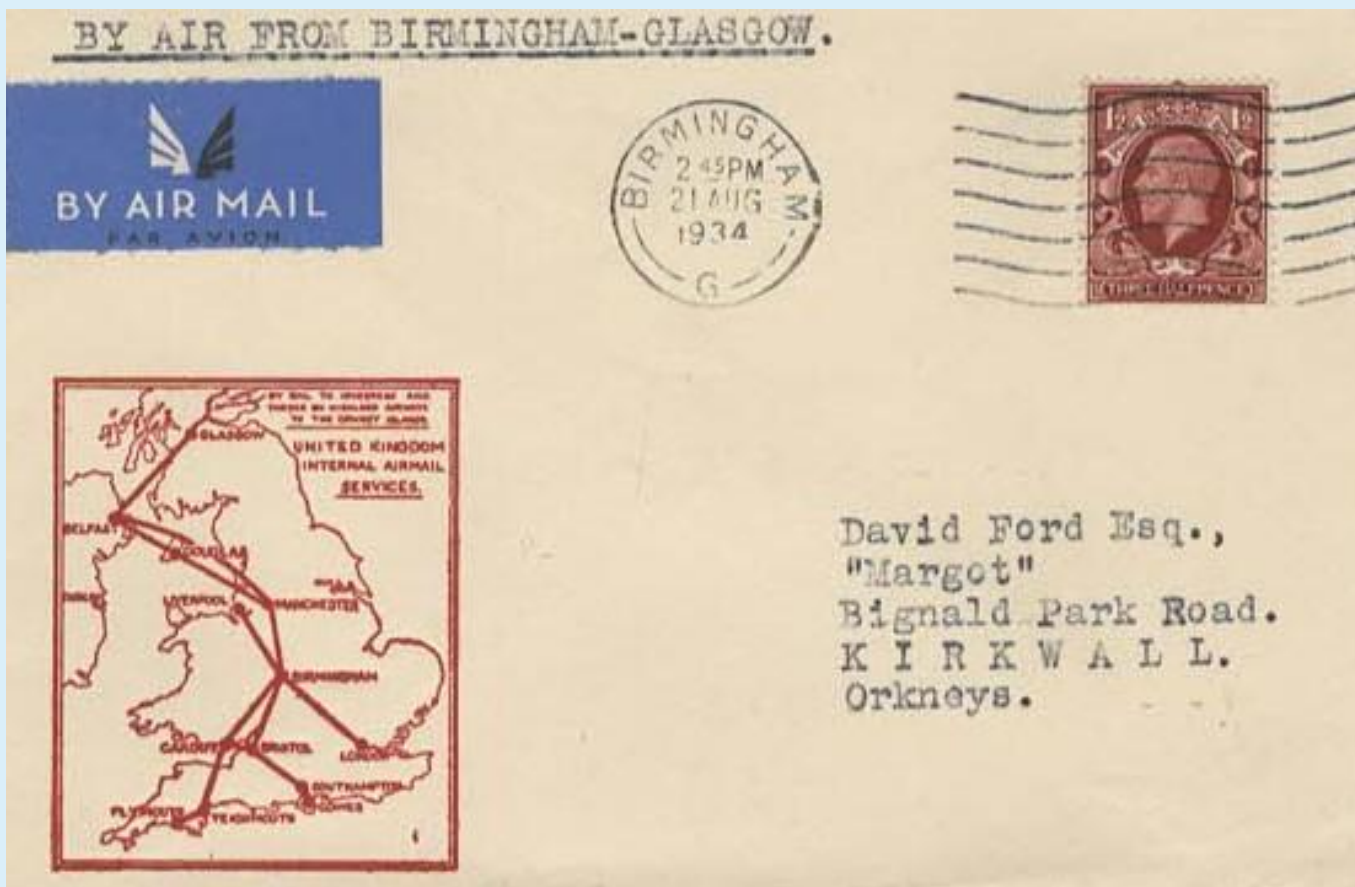


**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

**First Flight Cover with
RAS cachet**

First Flight cover from Manchester to Belfast. The cover was mailed on the 20th but due to bad weather there was no outward flights from Manchester and the cover was actually flown to Belfast on the 21st



**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

**This cover depicts the route
cachet.**

Colors include:

Red (to left)

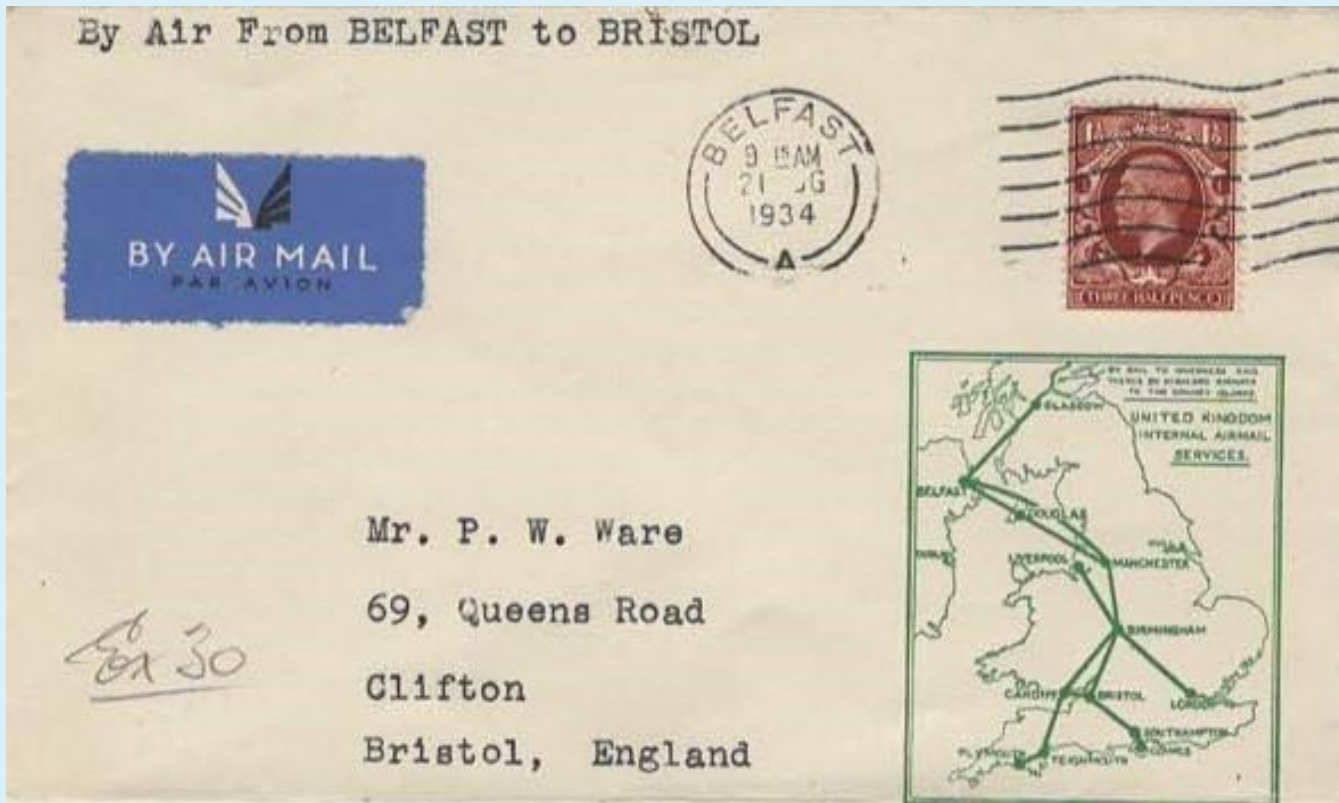
Green (next slide),

Black

Brown

Blue.

Flight cover from Birmingham to Kirkwell in the Orkney Isles. The cover was mailed on the 21st and went by RAS to Glasgow (first flight of this route) and then by rail to Inverness and by Highland Airways from Inverness to Kirkwell.



**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**
RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S

**This has the route cachet
on the right.**

Flight cover from Belfast to Bristol mailed on the August 21st. The flight left on the 20th to Manchester but bad weather forced it to abort and return to Belfast. So technically this is the first flight of this route.



**SEPTEMBER 29TH
1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

Last Flight Covers

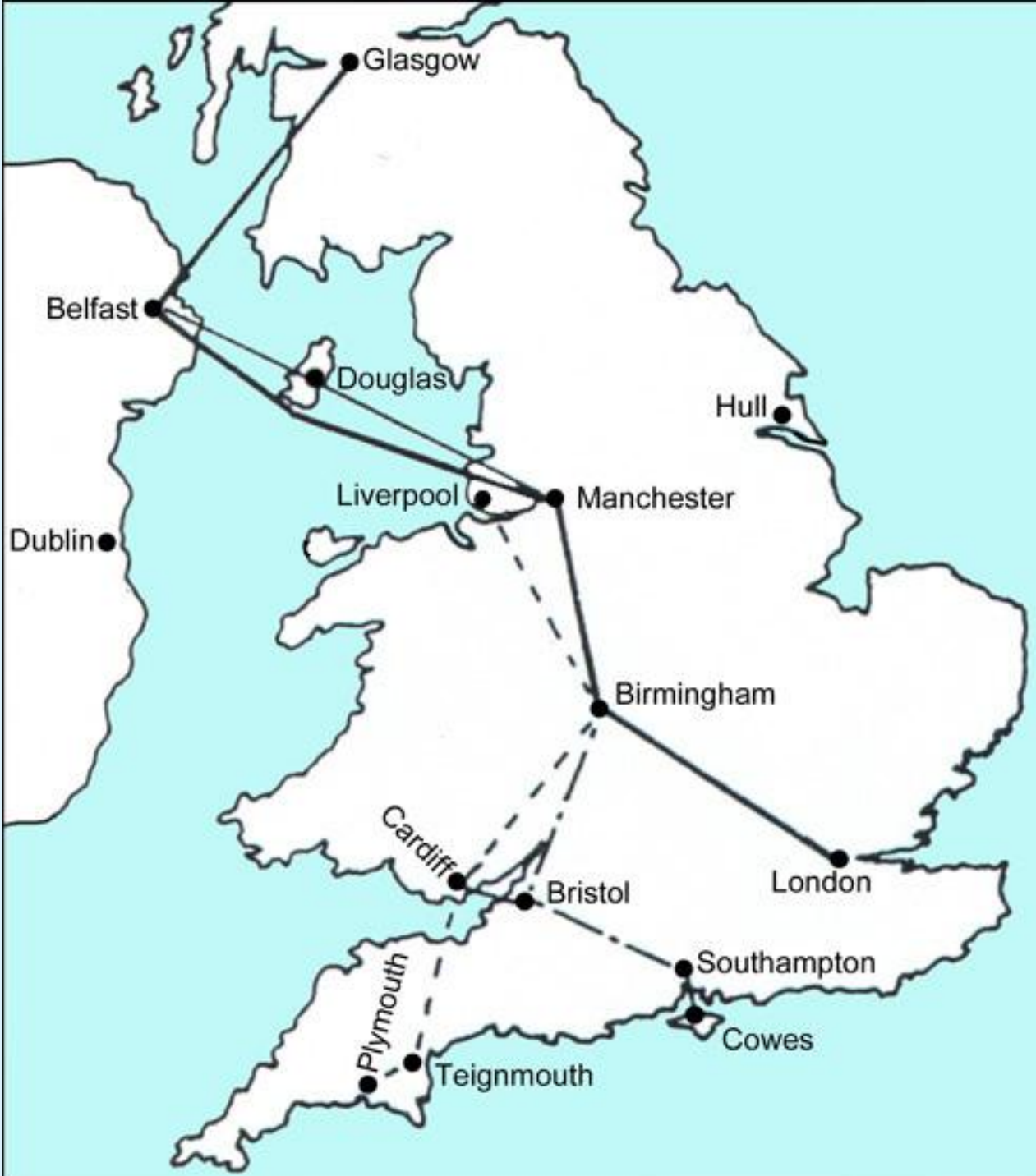
Last Flight Cover from Birmingham to Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

The route would have been Birmingham to Bristol to Southampton and then to Cowes.

**AUGUST 20TH TO
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**

THE ROUTES





**AUGUST 20TH AND
SEPTEMBER 29TH 1934**

**RAILWAY AIR SERVICES
R.A.S**



**First and Last Flight
Covers.
Cardiff to Liverpool**



**SEPTEMBER 29TH
1934**

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**Inverness in North East
Scotland to the Shetland
and Orkney Islands.**



MAY 29TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**Inverness in North East
Scotland to the Shetland
and Orkney Islands.**

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

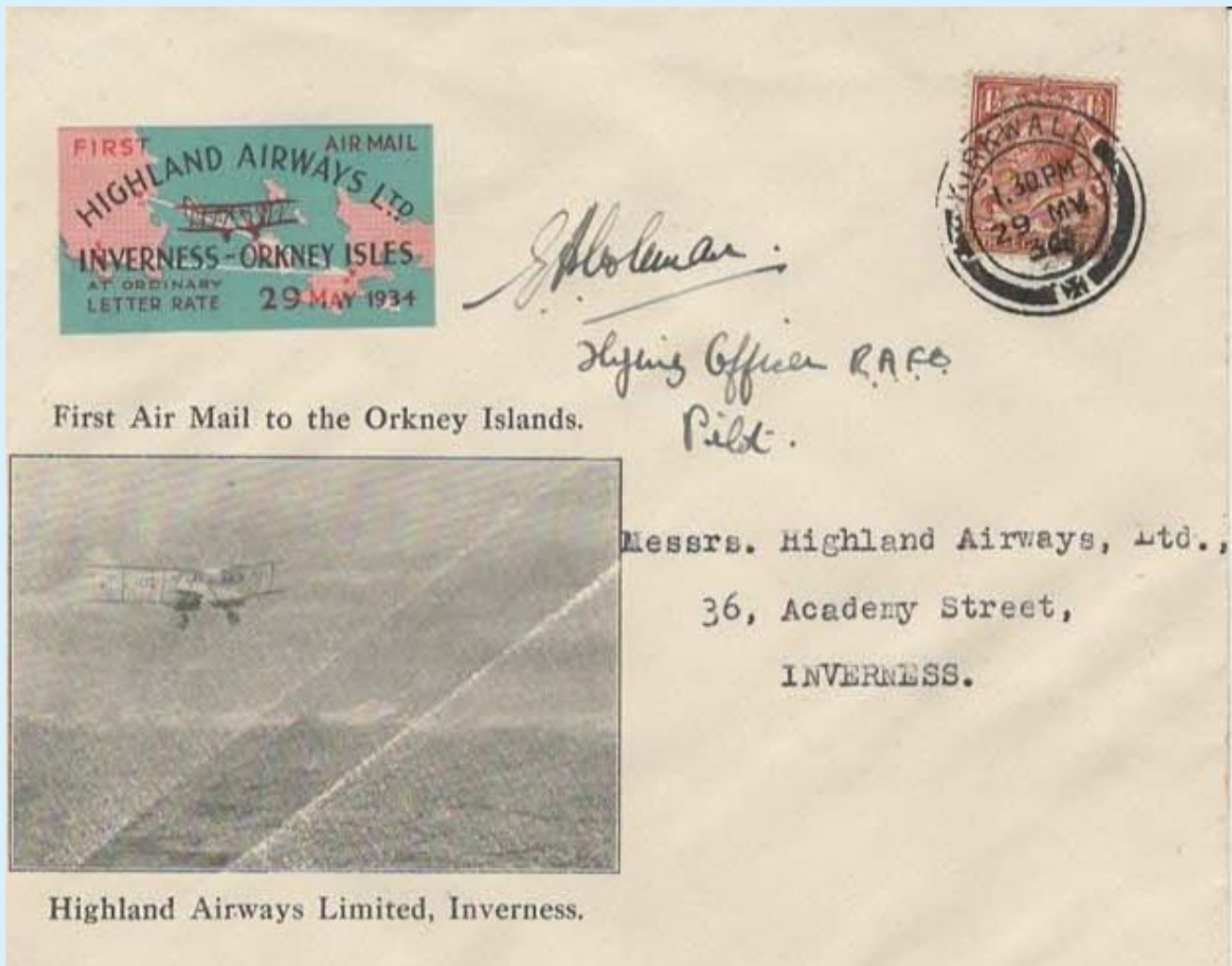
Capt. E. E. Fresson, O.B.E. (in plus fours in the centre of the group of pilots) briefing his crews at the start of a typical day's flying, at Longman Municipal Aerodrome, Inverness in 1937.

This painting by Edmund Miller, G.A.V.A., was commissioned by Dan-Air, and presented to Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, to be on permanent display in honour of the pioneering spirit of Capt. Fresson and Britain's private airlines.

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Printed by E. T. W. Dennis

Captain Ernest Edmund Fresson formed Highland Airlines on May 8th 1933 for passengers and newspapers. The Post Office wanted to ensure the viability of the company and did not award a until 1934.



MAY 29TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**Inverness in North East
Scotland to the Shetland
and Orkney Islands.**

COMPANY ENVELOPE FOR FIRST FLIGHT

**Only 400 produced. 200 flown in each direction
Cost: 2 Shillings Over GBP 9.0 today**



MAY 29TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**First Flight Inverness to
Kirkwall in the Orkney
Islands.**

**Label signed by Captain
E.E. Fresson, Pilot.**

MAY 29TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**First Flight Kirkwell to
Inverness then from
Inverness by rail to
Swindon England**



Mr Gordon Bond,
4, Dean Street,
SWINDON,
Wilts



MAY 29TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**First Flight Kirkwell to
Inverness and then to
Innverness.
then by rail to Swindon
England**



Mr Gordon Bond,
4, Dean Street,
SWINDON,
Wilts





MAY 29TH 1934

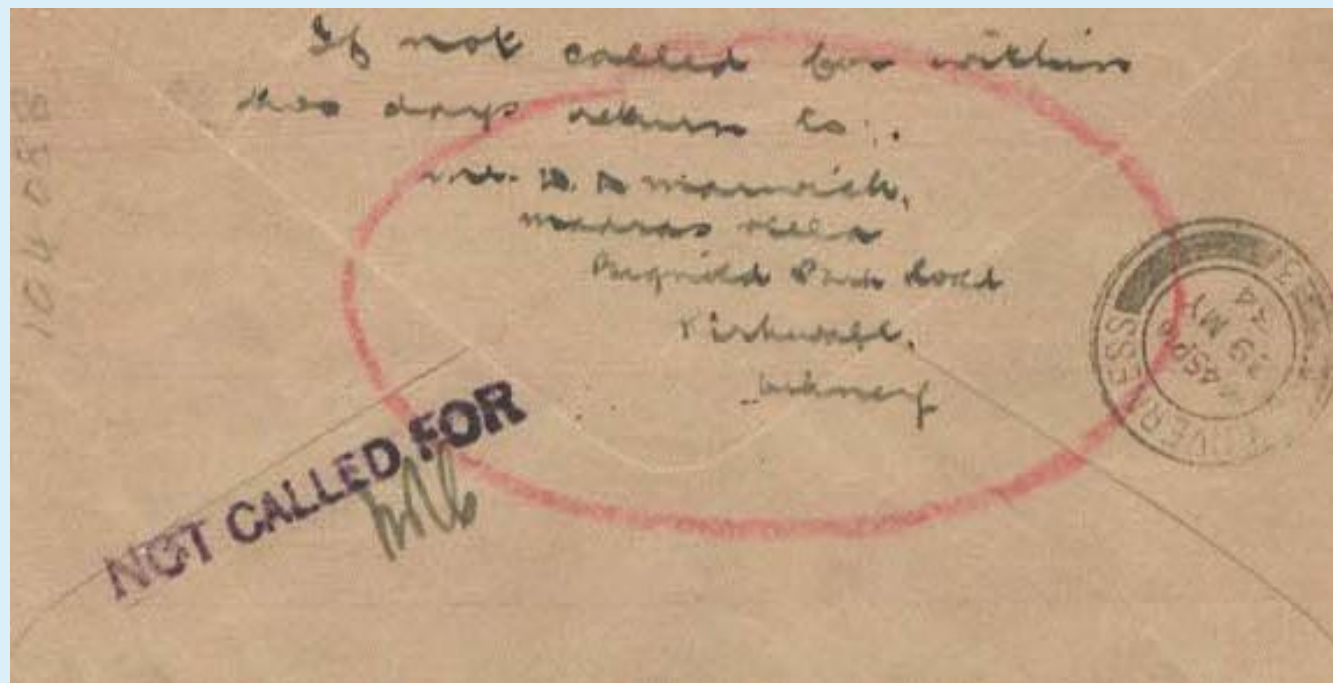
HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

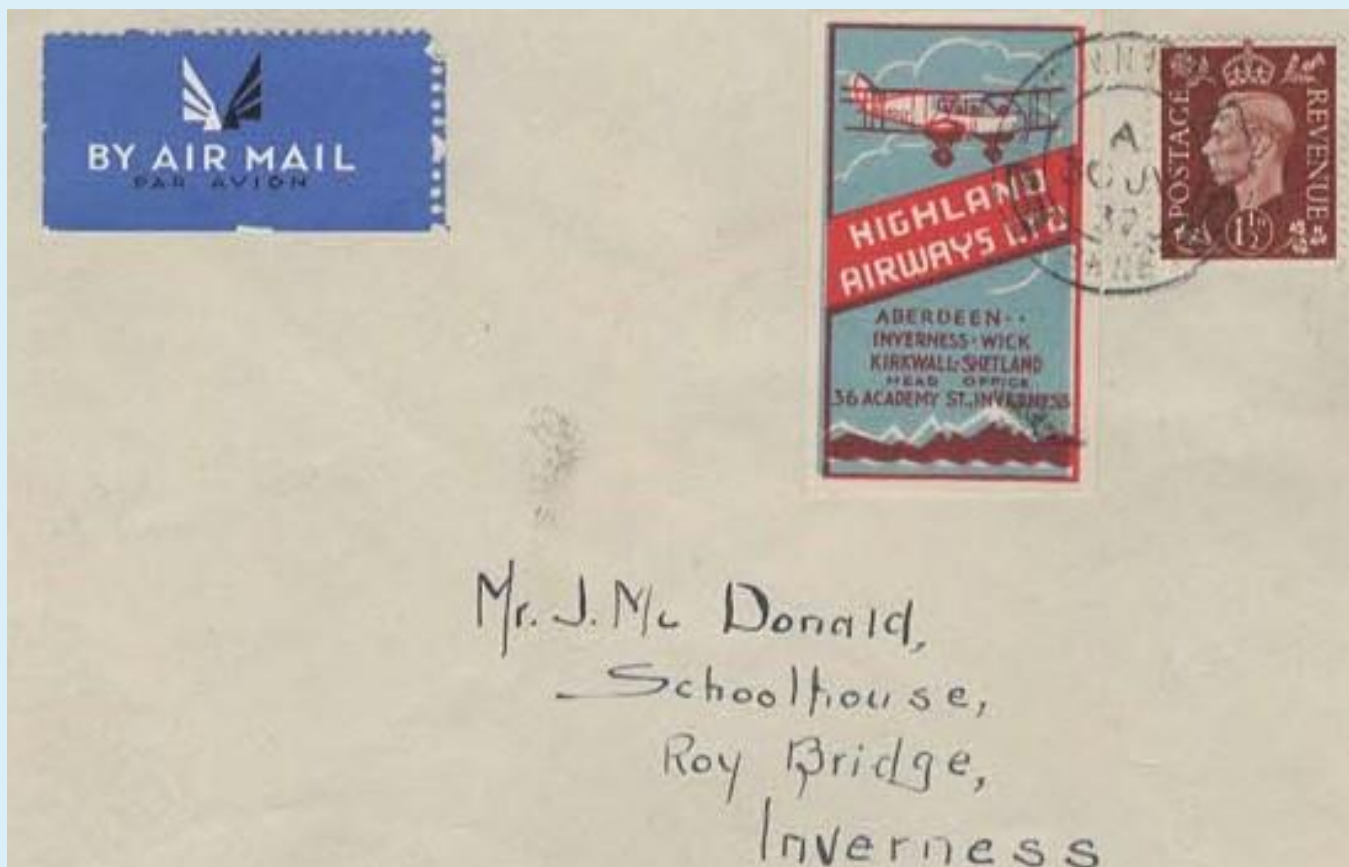
First Flight from Kirkwell to Inverness and never called for.

1st Cancel: Kirkwell May 29 1:30pm

2nd Cancel: Inverness May 29 4:45pm

**3rd Cancel: Inverness Accounts
June 1st 1934**





JUNE 30TH 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**Flight from Kirkwell to
Inverness**

**Different Label
Very rare especially as it is
tied to the stamp**

TIME-TABLE.**Inverness-Wick-Kirkwall Route.**

Dep. Inverness	Arr. Wick	Dep. Wick	Arr. Kirkwall
10.15 a.m.	11.05 a.m.	11.10 a.m.	11.35 a.m.
Dep. Kirkwall	Arr. Wick	Dep. Wick	Arr. Inverness
2.00 p.m.	2.25 p.m.	2.30 p.m.	3.20 p.m.

N.B.—This Service connects with 3.45 and 4 p.m. Trains leaving Inverness, arriving Buchanan Street, Glasgow, 9.22 p.m.; Waverley, Edinburgh, 9.34 p.m.; Euston, 7 a.m.

FARES:—Inverness-Kirkwall, £3 single; £5 return.
Inverness-Wick, £2 5s single; £4 return.

Aberdeen-Wick-Kirkwall Route.

Dep. Aberdeen	Arr. Wick	Dep. Wick	Arr. Kirkwall
10.15 a.m.	11.30 a.m.	11.35 a.m.	12.00 noon.
Dep. Kirkwall	Arr. Wick.	Dep. Wick	Arr. Aberdeen
4.15 p.m.	4.40 p.m.	4.45 p.m.	6.00 p.m.

FARES:—Aberdeen-Kirkwall, £3 5s. single; £5 10s return.
Aberdeen-Wick, £2 15s single; £5 return.

Trans-Pentland Service.**TIME-TABLE ON APPLICATION.**

Fares, £1 Single. Special Commercial Return Trips, 35/-
Smooth and Comfortable 7 Place Cabin Machines cruising at
110 miles per hour. No more sea sickness and considerable
saving in time.

"TRAVEL BY AIR."

Special arrangements made for forwarding heavy baggage.

DECEMBER 1ST 1934**HIGHLAND AIRWAYS****Inaugural Flight to Wick
Timetable**



DECEMBER 1ST 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**Inaugural Flight to Wick
Canceled in Inverness
With Wick Arrival
Cancel of 11:03 am**



WICK—KIRKWALL.



OPENING OF THE REGULAR
AIR MAIL SERVICE BY
HIGHLAND AIRWAYS, LTD.,
BETWEEN INVERNESS,
WICK AND KIRKWALL.

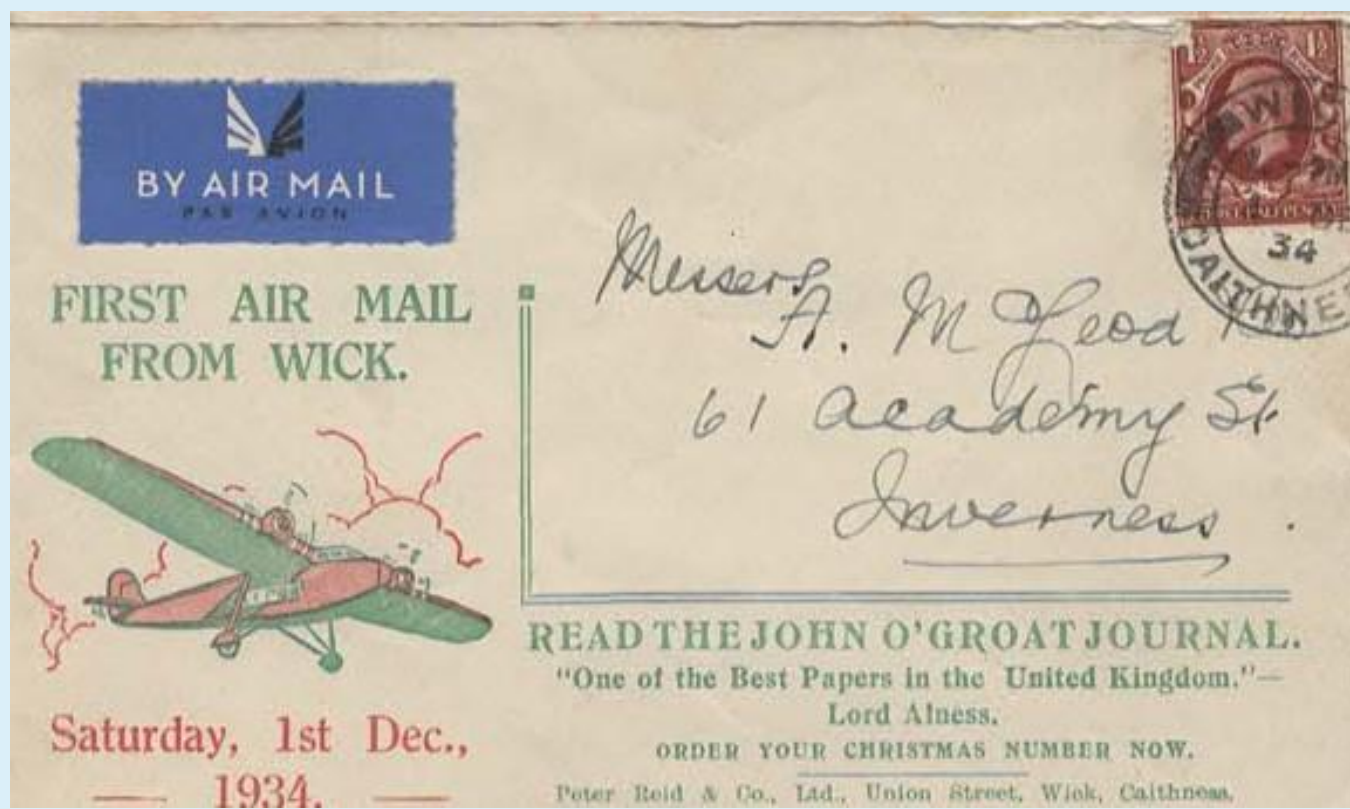
1st DECEMBER, 1934,

ALEXANDER CROSS,
Post Restante,
KIRKWALL.



DECEMBER 1ST 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS



Two types of first Flight
covers

HIGHLAND AIRLINES

SCOTTISH AIRWAYS

BRITISH EUROPEAN AIRWAYS

BRITISH AIRWAYS

DECEMBER 1ST 1934

HIGHLAND AIRWAYS

**The importance of
Highland Airways to
British Aviation**